Living Dyslexia in the Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

English is an integral part of the curriculum of the Primary School, so we need to take a closer look at people struggling with problems in their mother tongue: the dyslexics. It is known that dyslexia is one of the factors associated with dropping out of school, depending the fluent reading on a series of cognitive factors that have to organize and work together to achieve their mastery. Any deficits that may arise at the level of these competencies will jeopardize the academic, personal and professional success of the dyslexic. We intended took a look at the errors made by these students in both languages and with the analysis of the results, which showed that they make the same errors in both languages, we intend to create pedagogical tools that allow these students to overcome the difficulties arising from their problems in English as a foreign language. This project has potential to contribute to one of the greatest current educational challenges, the re-education of the dyslexia in the foreign language through early intervention and phonological awareness training.

Keywords: Dyslexia; Reeducation; Diferenciation

INTRODUCTION

In Portugal, with the enlargement of required school, we can tell that school has become more diversified and multicultural (Cesar, 2000). To defend the principles of an inclusive school means to believe that the teachers are able to promote the development of all students regardless of their culture, gender or intelligence. According to Viana e Leal, (2002), when questioned about why they go to school, children often answer that they go there to learn how to read and write. These are, undoubtedly the most basic learnings they're going to acquire, which will be transversal to all their studies. Reading and writing represent a basic need, though it's complexity, that carries on throughout all the learning process, and even the individual's life (Selikowitz, 2010; Teles, 2008). In a society where most messages are written, being illiterate means to depend on others, to be limited, missing the opportunity to take advantage of the enormous resources society has to offer (Rebelo, 1993). The learning of reading, even though a complex task, is relatively easy for most people. Thus, any deficit that appears when reading and writing can endanger the scholar, professional and social success of an individual, since reading is also a social act (Cruz, 2007). In the base of the reading and writing difficulties we have dyslexia. It is estimated that approximately 10% of the children suffer from dyslexia (Bock, 2007). Therefore, dyslexia is one of the main causes for school failure and should be evaluated in all pre-school children (Teles, 2008). In this context we also need to pay attention to the learning of a foreign language (English), seen as a fundamental learning in the education of the XXI century individual. The new challenge is to extend this learning to all children regardless their skills. However, English is seen as an opaque language, which causes more damage regarding it's learning for children with dyslexia, since the problem in the base of this disability is related to a phonological deficit (Sucena & Castro, 2009).

"How to live dyslexia in the foreign language" emerged as a challenge because this is a complex reality and it's sometimes unnoticed in the school context. Our project looks for its originality through the study of a recent and neglected topic being our goal to survey if the type of errors

shown by a dyslexic child in the mother and foreign tongue is the same or if it is distinct. We intend to contribute for a bigger sensibilization by the teachers towards this problem, making them aware of their role as educators and their duty to program specifically for these students, bearing in mind their features and the learning processes that better suit these students. This can lead to a development in the students' autonomy as well as to the promotion of their auto and hetero concept. In this context, we search to comprehend the inherent surroundings of these children education in scholastic context (public schools) with the need to obtain data that can take us to a reflexion and to the initiation of an investigation based on the following question: "In what way the analysis of error in the mother language (ML) and foreign tongue (English language - EL) of students with dyslexia, attending the 2nd cycle of basic education, evidences differences/similarities allowing overcoming strategies planning?" In the perspective of giving an answer to the posed question, the following objectives were drawn:

General Objective:
Know the error typology of dyslexic students when reading and writing both in mother and foreign tongue.

Specific Objectives:
Identify the error typology of students with dyslexia in their mother and foreign tongue;
Assess the similarities and differences revealed by the dyslexic students in the reading and in the writing of both mother and foreign languages;

We pass, next, to the presentation, analysis and discussion of the obtained results after the application of the aforementioned material.

RESULTS

Relatively to the analysis of the records of the observation matrix and typology errors, we opted to systematize the obtained data, resorting to a quantitative data analysis, comparing it in the Experimental Group(EG: ML and EL) with the obtained data in the Control Group (CG: ML and EL). A statistical analysis followed based on a comparative test of means for paired samples, two by two, being compared in the following way: EG (ML) vs EG (English); CG (ML) vs CG (English); EG (ML) vs CG (ML); EG (EL) vs CG (EL). As we can see in Graphic 1, the analysis of the comparative study of the obtained data relatively to the EG students, as for the ML and EL classes, allows us to conclude that, regarding the writing expression, the variables that cross in both languages with bigger incidence are the letter omission (83% in ML and 100% in EL), the limited vocabulary (75% in ML and 92% in EL), the grapheme confusion (67% in ML and 92% in EL), and the agreement error as for the number/time and verbal person with an incidence degree of 58% in ML and 83% in EL. As for reading, the fact is that it's hesitant (83% in ML and 92% in EL), with lettering omission (67% in ML and 58% in EL), with phoneme and grapheme confusion (58% in ML and 83% in EL), difficulty in transmitting opinions, as difficulty in the comprehension of texts, both with high degree of incidence of 58% in ML and 92% in EL.

Graphic 1: data obtine relatively to the EG students, as for the ML and EL classes.
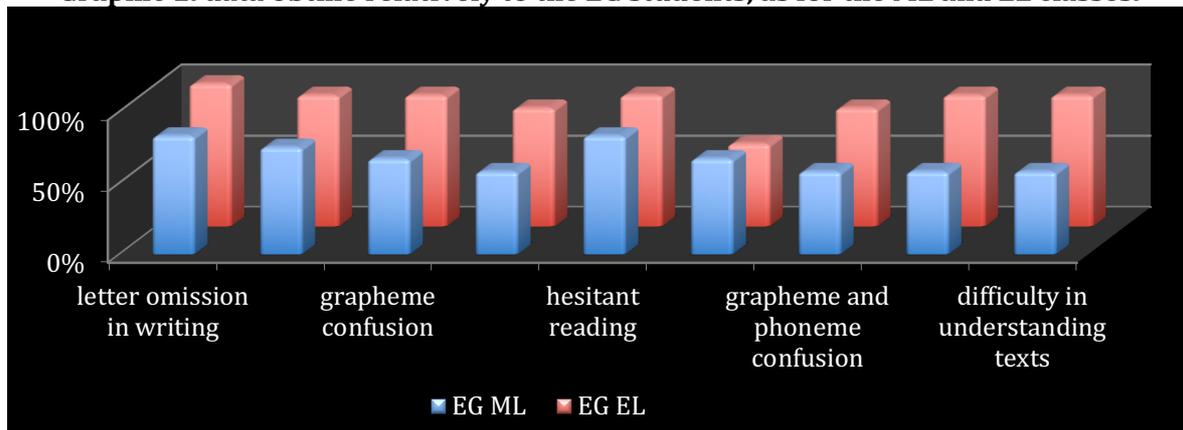
By the stated, we can conclude that the error typology of the reading and writing, in ML and in EL, is similar, being that that in English the degree of incidence is higher, which leads us to the question of the natural acquisition of the ML and the non-natural acquisition of the EL but, on the latter, a learning process, normally in school context, which training and practice refers exclusively to this context. Comparatively analyzing the gathered data between the EG and the CG, at the English level (Graphic 2), we can conclude that concerning the writing expression, they cross in the respect of the grammar rules (67% EG and 33% CG), of the gender concordance error (75% EG and 33% CG), and the concordance errors respecting the number/time and verbal person (83% EG and 25% CG). Regarding the reading level, we can assess that it's hesitant (92% EG and 25% CG), with inadequate expression (67% EG and 25% CG), with disrespect to punctuation (67% EG and 33% CG), difficulty in the comprehension of texts and difficulty in giving opinions, but with an incidence degree of 92% in the EG and of 33% in the CG. Relatively to the manifested difficulties concerning content evocation, the latter emerges with an incidence degree minor in the EG (25%) than in the CG (33%). It is noteworthy that the aspects that revealed a bigger incidence degree in the English EG, namely the letter omission with an incidence degree of 100%, the limited vocabulary and the grapheme confusion, at the level of written expression, with an incidence degree of 92%, or the difficulty for question interpretation (92%), the letter inversion and phoneme and grapheme confusion, on the reading level, with na incidence degree of 83%, didn't have any record of an occurrence on the English CG.

**Graphic 2: data from the EG and the CG, at the English level.**
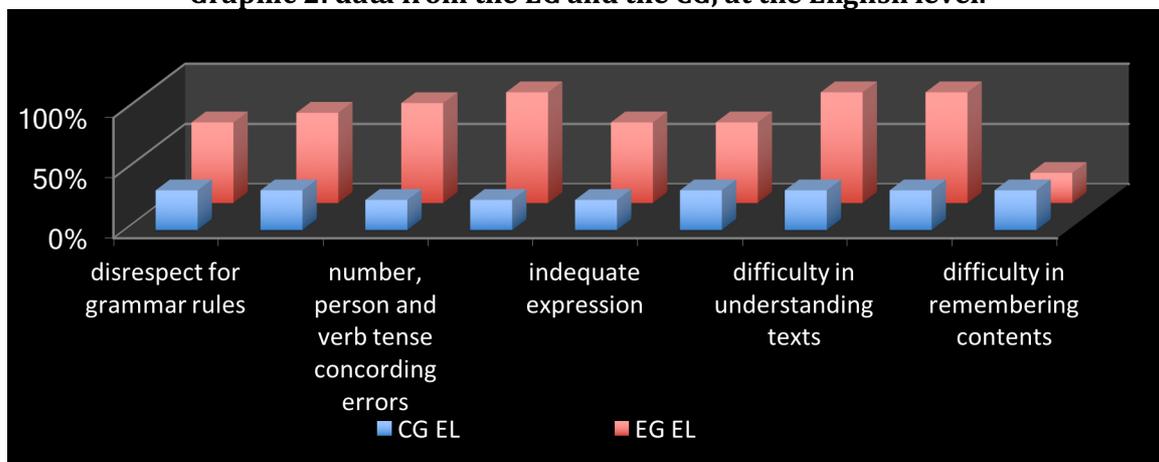
This allows us to assess that there is no direct and significate relation between the registered errors on the EG and on the CG in writing expression and reading. Relatively to the CG (Graphic 3), regarding the Portuguese Language and its writing language, an incidence degree of 25%

comes to surface regarding syntax errors with accentuation incidence, followed by the limited vocabulary, the abbreviated expression and inadequate syntax regarding punctuation with 17%. Regarding "spelling" the errors regarding number/time and verbal person comes to light with an incidence degree of 25%, followed by the spelling rules disrespect e by the faulty work/presentation anarquy with 17%; with the same incidence degree comes the language spelling rules disrespect. As for "reading", we get an incidence degree of 33% on the punctuation disrespect, followed by hesitant reading and difficulty in opinion giving, with 25%. With a minor incidence degree we got the accents omission, the text interpretation difficulties, content evocation and question comprehension (17%).

Graphic 3: data from the CG in ML and EL.
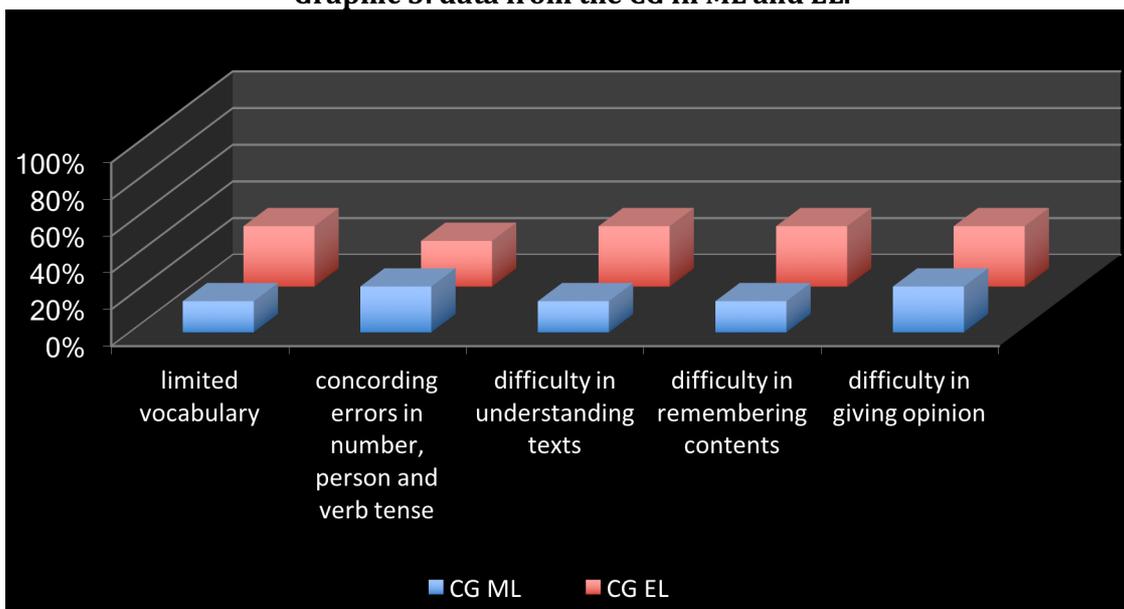
As for English, regarding the "written language", in first place we got the limited vocabulary and the language rules disrespect with an incidence degree of 33%, followed by the improper idea articulation, the errors regarding genus and the number/time and verbal person (25%). Relatively to "reading", we have an incidence degree of 33% in the content evocation difficulty, text comprehension difficulty, opinion giving, and the punctuation disrespect, followed by hesitant reading and inadequate expression with an incidence degree of 25%. The analysis and comparative study of the gathered data allows us to conclude that, regarding the Control Group, the data regarding the Portuguese and English Languages cross in writing language, regarding the limited vocabulary (with minor incidence in ML 17% and 33% in EL) and, with the same incidence degree in both languages, the incorrect articulation regarding the genus and the number/time and verbal person (25%). Regarding reading, the text comprehension difficulty, the content evocation (17% ML and 33% EL), and the opinion giving difficulty (bigger on the English 33% and 25% in ML) cross in both groups. Comparing the obtained data on the EG and CG, relatively to the Portuguese Language (Graphic 4), regarding writing expression, both arise in common with limited vocabulary, with a bigger incidence on the EG (EG 75%; CG 17%) and the concordance errors as for genus and number/time and verbal person, come with a bigger incidence on the EG (EG 58%, CG 25%); relatively to reading, the obtained data on the EG and CG have in common the fact that the reading is hesitant (EG 85%; CG 25%), the difficulty on opinion giving and the read text comprehension (EG 58%; CG 25% on the first and 17% on the second).

Graphic 4: data from the EG and the CG, at the ML level.
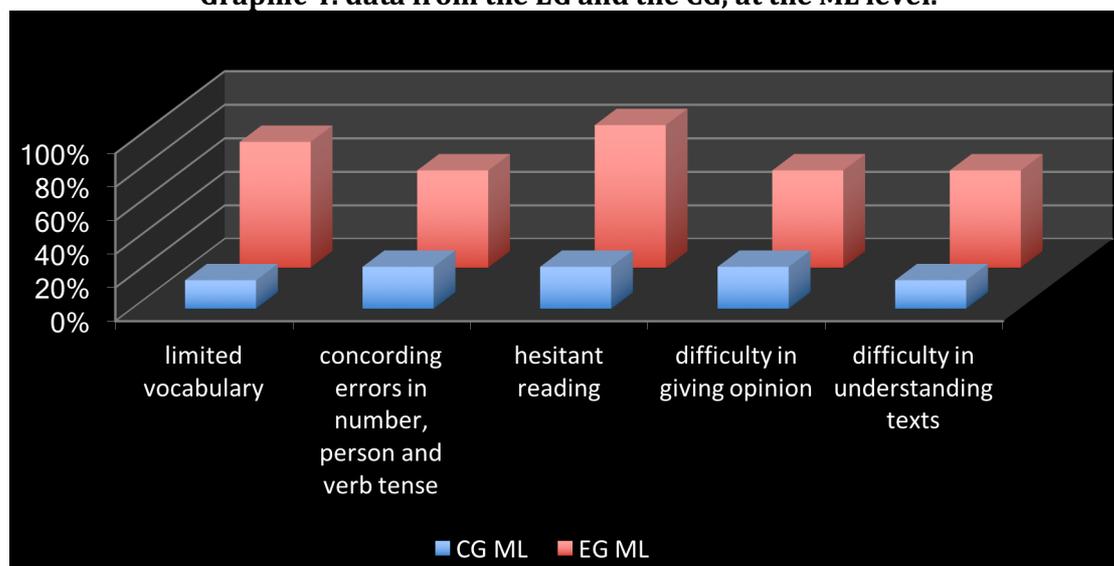
Common to all the groups of this study (EG ML, EG EL, CG ML, CG EL), emerges the difficulty on opinion giving, read text comprehension and the concordance errors regarding number/time and verbal person, where we can check a bigger incidence degree on the English EG, followed by the EG ML, o CG English and, lastly, the CG ML. At test was also accomplished for the mean equality in each one of the cases. It was concluded that there are significant statistical differences for the means between the variables relatively to the error typology measured on the dyslexic students of the 2nd cycle and the same variables of the general population, in Portuguese Language and in English. On the other hand, there were no significant statistical differences on the dyslexic students in both languages; this is verified on the general population. So it can be concluded that the error typology of the dyslexic students from the 2nd cycle is similar in both ML and in EL, although not the same happening in the CG.

Next we proceed to the analysis of the data registry of the error/deviation analysis grid regarding the reading of the narrative text (Appendix 1), which tells us that the obtained data after de application of this grid, allows us to assess that the EG students reveal similar difficulties in both observed languages, occurring with less frequency in ML. We highlight the fact that they can't, in a sistematic way, make substitutions with a logical sense, as well as the disability of, spontaneously, correct errors/deviations, making it hard for these students to make omissions that change the meaning of the phrase. As for the summary of the narrative texts, in both languages, it was verified that only the characters, time/place and story goblality (not in English) were mentioned. Through the data we can conclude that the variable incidence is bigger in English, being it harder for them to understand a text, since they can't summarize and identify the trigger element of the action, the shenanigans, the outcome, or the story globality. As for the CG, the student's revealed bigger difficulties in the comprehension of English texts, but the incidence degree doesn't reveal itself significate. A comparative analysis with obtained data in the CG shows that, contrary to what we see on the CG, the EG students show some knowledge of the way both languages work and structure themselves, being them able to identify eventual error or able to summarize, or retell, texts since they don't understand the information they just read since they couldn't decode revealing, also, difficulties in the retention of content associated to problems not only of decoding but also of concentration and memorization of that same content at all consistent with the characteristics associated to its problematic. (Farrel, 2008).

DISCUSSION

After the analysis of the obtained data at the time of the application of the observation matrix and registry of the error typology as well as the error/deviation analysis grid, when reading a text, through direct observation in a teaching room, and analysis of work sheets given over to the students, and field notes gathered during this process, and after informal dialogues with Portuguese Language, English, Special Education teachers and Class Directors of the students that compose the sample, we can conclude that the behavior of the dyslexic students is similar in reading and writing activities both in ML and in EL, with the differences that stand out corresponding not to a distinctive error typology, but to its incidence degree, bigger in the EL. The type of errors verified in the comparative analysis between the EG and the CG, allows us to conclude that there are mistakes, and errors, that are specific and typical to the dyslexia problematic. Relatively to the produced errors by the CG, in this study we limited ourselves to apply the predefined research instruments for the dyslexic students. Other errors were detected in the observation of the GC students, but, since they don't fit in the study scope, we opted not to describe them. Given that the dyslexic mistakes are identified at the ML level and, after the obtained data analysis, having concluded that they apply to English, there is now space for the creation of a series of materials that allows the EL teachers to work effectively aiming for the reeducation and academic success of the dyslexia students, demystifying this problematic and the inherent characteristics, making teachers believe in the reeducation of these students, since these are students that can learn and assimilate the lectured content, with the teacher finding the best strategy to transmit these knowledge, work on the self-esteem of the student through the use of multisensorial techniques keeping him motivated and involved in the apprenticeship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research took place in eight 2nd cycle schools, with their choice being non-random since a previous analysis for information gathering, regarding which schools had 5th and 6th grade students with formally diagnosed dyslexia. We chose these education levels because, even if dyslexia can be diagnosed in the primary school, it's in this phase that students develop the learning of cognitive skills that underlie this investigation: reading and writing not only in the mother tongue, but also in the English language (many schools only initiate English as an extracurricular activity in primary school on the 3rd grade, mostly covering activities that allow orality development). Our investigation fell in a quantitative and qualitative study with a multiple case study underlie, which took place in a natural environment (class room), with 12 dyslexic students in an Experimental Group (EG) and 12 non dyslexic students in a control group (CG) attending the 5th and 6th grades of the 2nd cycle of basic education (public schools). In this kind of study "buscamos el detalle de la interacción com sus contextos" (Stake, 2005, p.11). In Yin (1994), we can read that this is the most common strategy when we pretend to know the "who" and the "why", when the researcher has little control of the real events, or none, and when the investigation field focus in a natural phenomenon inside a real life context. The case study focus in individual aspects. It is intended to know about the general looking to the specific, allowing us to discover the complexity of certain relations. The professor/researcher was the main agent in data collection through direct observation and interaction with the students, through informal conversations. The data collection methods, essentially descriptive (observation matrix, error typology registry and error/deviation analysis grid for the reading of narrative texts (cf appendix 1) where assessed before its application suffered some alterations proposed by the teachers on the terrain. This material had the intention of describing the difficulties and error typology given by the students during the production/expression in the reading and writing activities both in mother and foreign tongue, based on the Portuguese Language Learning Goals for the 2nd cycle of basic education, as the foresee performance descriptors for this education level, since these have sought to

define "the knowledge that all students must achieve in education language as result of formal education activities". In the basis of definition/elaboration of the Portuguese Language Learning Goals are the normative documents – Nacional Curriculum of the Basic Education and Basic Education Portuguese Program– which organize itselves in five specific skills: oral comprehension, oral expression, reading, writing expression and explicit language knowledge. As for the foreign language, English, we chose the Common European Board of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, evaluation (Unesco, 2005), since this is a document emanated by the European Council, in the scope of the Linguistic Politics for a Plurilingue and Multicultural Europe which theoretical framework underlies the Programmatic Orientations for Teaching and Learning of the English language on the 2nd Cycle and the Essential Skills – Foreign Languages of the Nacional Basics Education Curriculum (CNEB). The in place programs for the English Language (EL) on basic education are previous to the CNEB, oughting to, nonetheless, be as well considered as reference documents for curricular development, in pair with the Essential Skills. Thus, for the observation matrix elaboration and registry of the error typology given by the students in the process of reading and writing in the Mother Language, in this case, Portuguese (ML) and in the foreign English Language we base ourselves in the manual emanated by the Nacional Exams Jury (Education and Science Ministry, 2011) that refers the error typology given by the dyslexic students (52 variables selected – Appendix B), as in some works assessed, among others, the reading fluency velocity (Farrel, 2008), based on a group of reading performance descriptors for the 2nd cycle (Viana, 2007), the learning goals for the Portuguese Language of the 2nd cycle and the emanated document from the Education Ministry "Nacional Reading Education Plan" (Viana Leal, 2002), as well as the specific and differentiated pedagogical intervention in 2nd cycle children (Gimeno, 2005), the programmatic orientation for the teaching of English in the 2nd cycle (26) and the describers of the performance levels defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). As for the analysis of errors/deviations when reading of a narrative text grid, that proceeds to the process evaluation, has as an objective, using the Likert scale, the observation and analysis of the different skills that students use, or not, when reading in ML and EL.

CONCLUSIONS

Aware of the limitations relatively to the representativity of the sample, we hope that the defined objectives that we intended to achieve throughout this work, can be used as tools to futures interventions in dyslexic students.

Relatively to the 1st objective: Identify the error typology of dyslexic students in ML and EL, after jointly analysis of the evaluation matrix of errors/deviations when reading a narrative texto, as well as of the documents from the students portfolio, it was easy to identify the error typology of the above in the reading activities in ML and in English and to verify that its similar in both of them, with the incidence degree being bigger in English language. This refers us to a question regarding the natural aquisition of the ML, since the EL doesn't work that way but comes as a learning process, normally in school context, which training and practice refers exclusively to this context. Thus, the comparative analysis of the study, relatively to the EG students, as for ML and English, let's us conclude, regarding writing expression, that the variables cross in both languages with a bigger incidence in letter omission and grapheme confusion, and in concordance errors regarding number/time and verbal person as the incidence degree. Regarding reading, the fact is that its hesitant, with letter omission, phoneme and grapheme confusion and difficulty in opinion giving, as well as difficulty in text comprehension. Common to all groups of this study (EG ML, EG EL, CG ML, CG EL), appeared the difficulty in opinion giving and read texts comprehension, and concordance errors in

number/time and verbal person, verifying as well a bigger incidence degree in EL EG, followed by EG ML, EL CG and, lastly, CG ML.

Through the error/deviation analysis grid, when reading a narrative text, we could assess that the EG students cannot make substitutions with a logical sense, and cannot spontaneously correct errors/deviations. As for the summarization and re telling of the narrative texts, in both languages, the characters, time/place and story globality (not in English), were only partially mentioned. Through the obtained data, we could conclude that the variable incidence is bigger in English, having been checked that it's harder for them to understand a text, since they can't summarize/re tell because of the non-identification of the triggering element of the action, the shenanigans, outcome of story globality. Beyond this data, we can also conclude that the type of errors verified in the comparative analysis between the EG and the CG allows the conclusion that there specific and typycal errors of the dyslexia problematic.

Relatively to the 2nd objective: Asses the similarities and differences revealed by the dyslexic students in reading and in writing, in mother tongue and in foreign tongue, equally analyzed the error evaluation matrix and the error/deviations analysis grid when reading a narrative text and after the application of the t test for the mean equality, there were no significant statistical differences found in dyslexic students, in both languages, with the same being verified in the general population, with high number of similarities.

As for the 3rd objective: Compare the students errors both in Mother Language and in Foreign Language in ownership of research instruments used in previous objectives (the error evaluation matrix and the error/deviations analysis grid when reading a narrative text), we can conclude that the variables that came, simultaneously, in a bigger number in the ML and EL EG, are the limited vocabulary and the letter omission. There are other variables with significant results, such as the letter inversion, the confusion of graphemes/phonemes and concordance errors in numbers/time and verbal personal, being these the verified data only on the EG in both languages. As for reading, it's common to both languages the fact that its hesitant and without rhythm, highlighting the variables difficulty in text comprehension and difficulty in opinion giving and phoneme/grapheme confusion. Therefore, we conclude that the error typology of dyslexic students of the 2º cycle is similar in both ML and in EL, the same not being verified in the CG, since none of the variables registered a significant incidence.

In this study and given that was allowed to us to conclude that the error typology given from the dyslexic students is the same in both languages, it makes sense that the teachers of the Portuguese and English subjects work together so they can find a teaching strategy that fits to a dyslexic student. As made known, the errors of dyslexic students follow an identified typology pattern. It's up to the teachers to search more information about that same pattern, aiming for the effective reeducation of these students.

Synthesizing, and trying to give an answer to the defined question, we could conclude that:
- there is a similarity between the error typology that the students reveal in reading and writing activities, both in ML as in EL;
- there is verified error typology in the EG that was constant in both languages, the same not being verified in the CG;
- there seems to exist a big lack of knowledge and information in the teaching body in view of the problematic, with it being a core subject that the School promotes the formation of a boosted teaching body as well as a quality intervention;

The obtained data allows us to refute the idea that the more the language is opaque in the learning process, the bigger the difficulties the student reveals. With this an answer can be given to the question posed in the first place. We could observe that, relatively to the ML and EL there were no significant diferences as for the error typology, with the similarities coming in a bigger number than the diferences, with the incidence degree holding the only difference (bigger on the EL). Such allows us to think of intervention/reeducation strategies for these students.

We conclude this study and not our ride, resorting to a thought of Gimeno (2005), that we considered to represent, in part, the developed study, our convictions and deeper beliefs: "Mejoremos las pequenas cosas (…) hagamos políticas para resolver problemas concretos, elaborando programas *ad hoc*, proveyendo médios y adoptando estratégias adequadas, sin perder de vista la totalidade de un proyecto. Hagamos programas, desarrollémoslos y veamos sus resultados" (p. 150).

Let's, then, change the small things, and let's take small steps, in a path that renews itself continuously, made of successful starting points and so many other finish lines. These steps are visible in the totality of the developed investigation process that now reaches its end. Assuming this ending as a purpose for improvement of the learning process, its axiomatic to consider that the goal is to go even further, and that this journey that now reaches its end is the beginning of several other paths to be walked and explored.

APPENDIX A - ERROR/DEVIATION ANALYSIS GRID FOR THE READING OF NARRATIVE TEXTS

	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Almost always	Always
In what way does the student build the meaning of a text:					
1 – Aknowledges that an error changed the meaning of a sentence					
2 – Makes substitutions with a logic meaning					
3 – Is able to spontaneously correct errors					
In what way does he modify the meaning of the text?					
1 – Through nonesense substitutions					
2 – Makes omisions that change the meaning of the sentence					

	No	Partially		Yes	
In summarazing or retelling narrative texts, mentions the following elements:					
1 – Characters					
2 – Time or place					
3- Action starter					
4 – Escapades					
5 – Outcome					
6 – Story as a whole					

APPENDIX B - OBSERVATION MATRIX, ERROR TYPOLOGY REGISTRY

	Written Expression	
1. Language Development	1.1 Limited vocabulary	
	1.2 Inadequate sintax	accents
		punctuation signals
	1.3 Ideas articulation	
	1.4 Abbreviated Expression	
2. Spelling	2.1 Omissions	letters
		syllables
		words
	2.2 Inversions	letters
		syllables
	2.3 Confusions	phonemes
		graphemes
		diphthongs
		letters
	2.4 Additions	syllables
		accents
	2.5 Repetitions	letters
		syllables
		words
		expressions
	2.6 Connections	
	2.7 Separations	
	2.8 Substitutions	
	2.9 Semantic assimilations	
	210 Concording errors	gender
		number/person/verb tense
		disrespect of rules
3. Graphomotor lines	3.1 Disrespect of margins	
	3.2 Work anarchy	
	1.1 Hesitant	
	1.2 no rhythm	
1. Fluency	1.3 Inadequate expressions	
Expressions Comprehension	1.4 Punctuation disrespect	
	1.5 Wrongly grouped words	
	1.6 Difficulty in remember contents	
	1.7 Difficulty in interpreting texts	
	1.8 Difficulty in interpreting questions	
	1.9 Difficulty in giving opinions	
	2.1 Omissions	letters
		syllables
		words
		accents

2. Exatitude	2.2 Inversions	letters
		syllables
		phonemes
	2.3 Confusions	graphemes
		diphthongs
		letters
	2.4 Additions	syllables
		accents
	2.5 Substitutions	
	2.6 Semantic assimilations	

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